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Ambassador Godec Visits MYSA Football Match in Mathare

During Ambassador Godec's visit on the first day of the tournament, he met the players, community members, and organizers of the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA). He spoke to a group of 20 community members about the importance of free, fair, and peaceful elections, and reiterated key points from President Obama's recent video message. The Ambassador arrived during the first of the matches featuring children under the age of 12 and spoke with the players themselves about their love of football, their participation in MYSA, and their future goals. When asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, one young player enthusiastically exclaimed his intention to become an ambassador!

Started over 26 years ago, the Mathare Youth Sports Association works to empower young people through sport to help them gain self-confidence and leadership skills in order to achieve their full potential. The organization currently has over 25,000 members, including 4,000 young girls. More than 900,000 people are estimated to live in Mathare. Very few have access to running water, electricity or sanitation. In 2007 and 2008, Mathare was a hotspot during the post-election violence.

From Feb. 23-24, MYSA, supported by CSO, hosted a Football4Peace tournament in Mathare. The tournament's aim was to increase awareness of the importance of free, fair, and peaceful elections among Mathare community members, but particularly among youth. The tournament was organized so that children of different ethnicities played together on the same teams, helping to reduce inter-ethnic tensions in the slum and promote youth solidarity. Across 16 zones, 64 teams made up of 3,456 players between the ages of 11-16 participated in the tournament. Several of the event's organizers became involved with MYSA growing up in Mathare and one alumnus is currently running for Constituency Representative in the area. At each of the tournament zones, MYSA volunteers passed out voter education materials including copies of the Shujazz voter education flyer, the Kenyan Constitution, and Uraia's Citizen Handbook. Community members were also encouraged to sign banners pledging peace during the upcoming election.



